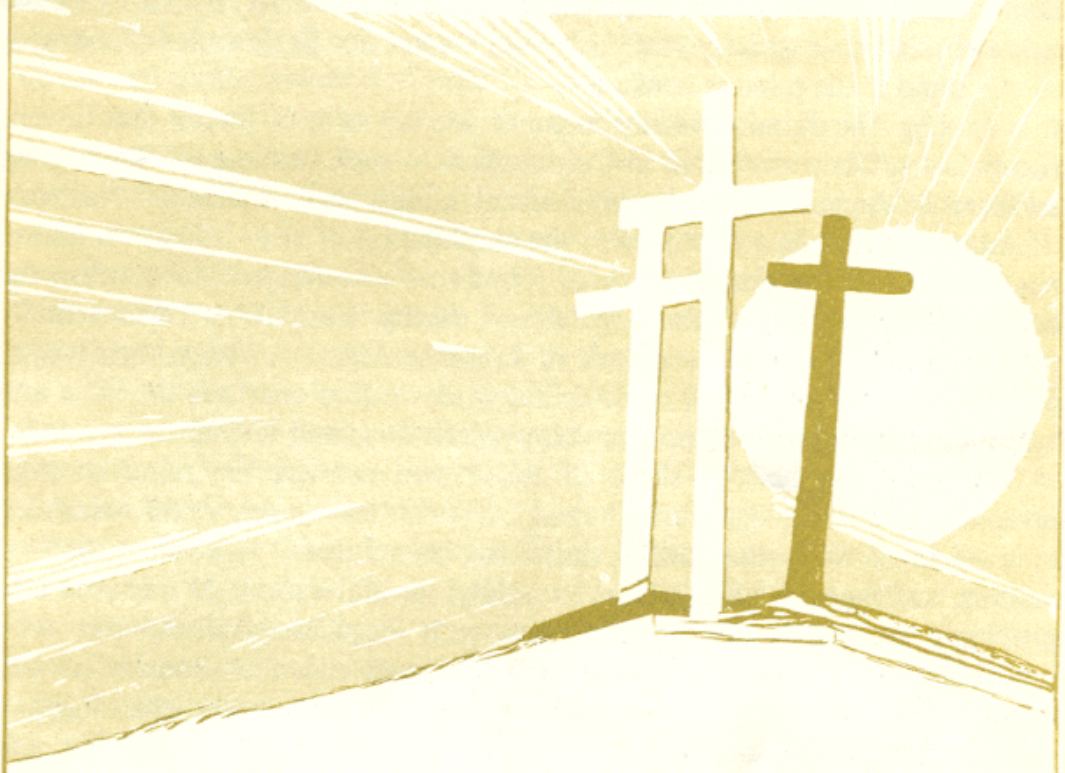
RESTORATION REVIEW



THE CLEAR MIND

The best way to prove the clearness of our mind is by showing its faults; as when a stream discovers the dirt at the bottom, it convinces us of the transparency and purity of the water. — *Alexander Pope*

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With All Your Mind . . .

THE CLEAR MIND

The first two installments of this series have given witness to what most of us will admit, even if we may have to be reminded, that *the mind matters.* Jesus wants our minds as well as our hearts and souls. If therefore we are to *think* as believers, we are to think *clearly.* A muddled mind can hardly be the renewed mind that scripture calls for, and we are not likely to love God with all our mind if the mind is confused.

Among the mind's deadly enemies are those evil forces that invent vocabularies. They are found in Communism in such verbage as "liquidating undesirable elements," which really means killing party dissidents. Nazism's "final solution" was a reference to the annihilation of Jews. Our own nation has indulged in the manufacture of terms that are designed to confuse the issue. The "relocation of the population" during World War 2 was actually the forced evacuation of thousands of Japanese Americans from their homes on the west coast. A lot of name-calling goes on that confuses the issue and arouses prejudice, such as *sexist, racist, reactionary,* and *liberal.*

Religion has had its share of those who confuse the mind through invention of terminology. Any theology text can leave one's mind swimming in a maze of lingo that defies simplicity. Sacraments, sanctuary, sacristy, sanctus, suffrages are but a few, to indulge in alliteration. If one gets into prophetic studies he not only meets with dispensationalism, but with pretribulationism and postribulationism, and even midtribulationsim, as well as realized eschatology, the "parenthesis church," existential eschatology, to name a few. Calvinism has given us the likes of limited atonement and effectual grace.

It is not to be wondered that a reformer like Alexander Campbell would call for "the restoration of a pure speech, or the calling of Bible things by Bible names." Campbell insisted that more than half the controversies have been about words of foreign importation, which have supplanted the language of the Holy Spirit.

Those of us who are heirs of the unity movement he launched have also been guilty of darkening counsel by a failure to give scriptural terms their proper import, such as *minister, ministry, worship, sanctuary, gospel, truth, faithful, communion, church.* We have lost one of Campbell's most important conclusions, that the Bible must be seen as a book of facts rather than a book of doctrines or opinions. This has caused us to yield to the common practice of sermonizing, which is one of those foreign importations, rather than the teaching of the word.

So, for the mind to be clear it must be swept clean of the language of Ashdod and theological jargon. Further, we must come to see that there are rules and principles for clear, straight thinking just as there are for all orderly things in this world. Some logicians through the centuries have been especially helpful in discovering principles of clear thought just as others have discovered mathematical and scientific principles.

Rene Descartes was one of these. *His Rules for the Direction of the Understanding,* which sets forth 21 rules, was intended to show man how to think "clearly and distinctly." His first rule states that the purpose of any study should be to be able to give a true interpretation of all that is set forth, one that we often ignore. We should read not merely for information, but with the intent of being able to explain it. If we cannot explain something clearly and *solidly* (to use his term), it probably is not clear to us.

His second rule is that we should seek to understand only those things that are within our range of understanding, and the third is that we should not rely upon what others have said or what we ourselves conjecture, but what we can clearly deduce from the evidence set forth. Such methods, which began in doubt (it takes doubt to establish faith, he concluded) led Descartes to certainty of knowledge, including a knowledge of God, whose existence the old philosopher believed he could prove logically. Moreover, he believed that God has written such rules as these in nature and upon the mind of man, so that when we reflect upon them we can know that they are true.

He therefore set forth his method for clear thinking: (1) Accept nothing as true that you cannot clearly recognize to be such; (2) Divide difficult problems into parts and work on each part; (3) Work with those parts that are the easiest to handle, then the next easiest, and on to the more difficult, (4) Make your review of all the material so complete as to omit nothing.

Descartes' rules and method would revolutionize our study of the Bible and change many conclusions that we have drawn from it, too often based on tradition and what others have said. *Draw conclusions only as the evidence allows. Accept nothing as true except what is clearly demonstrated to be true.* What would these two rules do to a lot of doctrines in the Church of Christ? This is why Campbell, influenced as he was by Descartes, talked about looking at the *facts* of scripture, not doctrines. That is strange talk to a lot of our people. Let me explain what Campbell was getting at.

A fact is something said or done. The Bible talks about what God has said or done, *facts.* By applying our minds to them we can come to understand the facts of scripture, and this is the way of unity, for we can believe alike on what the Bible actually *says,* though maybe not on what men think it means by what it says (doctrines). All facts are truths, Campbell noted, but truths are not facts, for something must be *done* before there can be a

fact. That God exists is a truth, not a fact, while God created the universe is a fact, something done. Paul was an apostle --- a truth; that he preached the gospel as an apostle is a fact. Only facts save, for these reveal what God has *done* to save us. We should not speculate upon facts, but allow them to bear testimony as to how God has acted. An opinion has never saved anyone, nor has anyone ever been lost for disbelieving an opinion. We are therefore to approach the Bible as a book of facts primarily and seek to have a clear understanding of what is actually said.

A famous essay in the history of thought is one by C. S. Peirce on *How to Make Our Ideas Clear,* which challenged a lot of traditional thinking, and it bears resemblance to Campbell's emphasis given above. Peirce contends that any idea or thought can mean only the action (or habit) it produces, or our idea or thought of anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects. You have no idea of fire, for instance, except in terms of its effects --- it heats, illumines, melts, etc. "To know what we think," he says, "to be masters of our own meaning, will make a solid foundation for great and weighty thought," but he regrets that most people cherish ideas that are too vague and meaningless to be positively false and are therefore accepted as true. If all ideas could be seen in terms of the effects they produce, which can be clearly determined, a lot of our fuzzy thinking would be eliminated.

Peirce applies this concept to the theological idea of transubstantiation. He notes that Roman Catholics concede that the bread and wine possess all the sensible attributes of bread and wine, and yet they literally become meat and blood, they claim. He says this is nonsense, for if the wine has all the properties of wine (the effects we see or taste in wine) then it cannot be blood, which has different properties. He insists therefore that there is no real difference between the Catholic and Protestant positions since they agree that the bread and wine have *all* the qualities of bread and wine, which precludes their having any other qualities. It is simply that Catholic thought in this instance is muddled by theological jargon.

What then is a *clear* idea? One that we can see in terms of what the idea does or the effect it has, which should eliminate all the vague "subjective" ideas we have. Take the idea of *gospel.* If you see this as good news that is proclaimed, believed, obeyed, as *facts* of what God has done to redeem the world, then you see its effects. That is the what *gospel* is, nothing else. It is not a vague bundle of doctrines, variously interpreted, running all through the New Testament. Some even see *a cappella* music and anti-millennial teaching as gospel. We come to a clear idea of what gospel is when we identify specifically *what it does,* its *effects* or its *qualities.* It is therefore different from teaching, which has different effects and qualities, and accomplishes something different.

So with all ideas, whether prayer, the Lord's Supper or whatever. When you determine what happens in the Supper, what it does, all its qualities as revealed in the *facts* of scripture, then you will have a clear idea of what it is. These things of course, with all biblical themes, involve a lifetime of study.

A mind with clear ideas is therefore a disciplined mind, disciplined not only by love for God but also by rules and method that God has given for' the direction of the mind. --- *the Editor*

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LET'S GET MARRIED
(at First Methodist or First Christian?)

This interesting observation comes from a reader in Colorado who used to preach for a Church of Christ in Texas:

"It was a common practice for young people to have their weddings in First Methodist building since they could have music for the processional and recessional. The brethren were perfectly willing for this to be done, but it could not be done in our church building."

He goes on to say that his son is to be married and that he and his bride-to-be want a friend of theirs to play and sing at their wedding. The girl is a graduate of both ACU and TCU, and they are both very active in the Church of Christ, but the church will not allow them to use the building if anybody is to *play* as well as sing. They have therefore sought out a Christian Church for the most memorable event of their lives.

This little story, along with numerous others that could be told, suggests that we have become well nigh cuckoo about instrumental music. I'll tell just one more, the case of one of our missionaries in Thailand, who suggested to his co-laborer that a church they had nurtured was now able to care for itself, while they go on to another field. "We can't leave them like this," said the other missionary. "Suppose they put in instrumental music while we're gone?"

What impressed me about that story was that the missionary did not fear that the young church might sacrifice to idols in their absence or install a statue of Buddha. He feared the instrument! It might be, therefore, that instrumental music is not as obviously the sin we have made it out to be. Outside two small Presbyterian sects in Scotland, and perhaps some Quaker groups, we are the only ones in all of Christendom who have

discovered what a terrible sin the instrument is. Even the Greek Orthodox Church, long-time *acappella*, sometimes uses instruments these days. Perhaps it proves nothing, but when we stand virtually alone in our understanding of what sins really matter it should give us pause to reexamine our claim.

And it must *really* matter when our kids have to go down to First Methodist or across to First Christian to get married, *in the way they want to get married.* And I don't fault any girl for not wanting one of our quartets stashed away in the balcony trying to sing her processional as she presents herself before the entire community. Have you ever attended an all-*a cappella* wedding? If ever you do, you are likely to ask *Is this really necessary?*

Fairness demands that we acknowledge that our folk *sometime* allow a portable organ to be imported for the sake of a wedding. It is admittedly a strange sight: an organ borne into one of our buildings and then out again, usually all within the hour. It is sometimes stipulated that its exit be post haste. It is not to "hang around" as if it were a floral arrangement.

I once conducted such a wedding myself, where the organ was imported for the Saturday night affair. I watched the procedure with loving amusement. The electrical outlets were all in the wrong places, so extension cords snaked their way among the pews to the organ, which did not seem to fit anywhere. The ground rules for the importation included "no religious songs," so the singers had to decide what was secular and what sacred. "I Love You Truly" apparently passed the test. Another rule was that the organ had to be removed that same night. It was something I wanted to see, just for the heck of it, so I watched as the organ was eased down the flight of stairs at the entrance of the building and hauled away.

Big Deal! I found myself thinking, and I fear that this is the impression we leave on our young people. We make much ado about those "sins" that do not really matter, while we are all too insensitive to the real evils in the world, such as injustice.

I am not suggesting that we go instrumental so as to accommodate our brides. I do not know that I am suggesting anything, except that we come down off of it and quit being phonies about instrumental music. There is no way for it to be as significant as a lot of our folk make it, who view an organ as a gargantuan symbol of apostasy and corruption. Imagine Ph.D.'s at Abilene interviewing a young Ph.D. fresh out of Yale, who had spent years studying weighty theological issues, and asking him his position on instrumental music!

Tiddlewinks! I suspect our kids see us playing this kind of game. It is of course all right to go to First Methodist for a wedding, but I don't like the reasons why. A girl who has served the church for years can't invite a friend to come in and sing at her wedding, accompanied by his guitar. He can't play his guitar in our church, not even for a wedding. How about tender loving care to a young sister during the most important moment in her life? How about her feelings? Cannot *insensitivity* be as grave a sin, perhaps even greater, in God's eyes than a guitar? A guitar! Now aren't we sometime a bit ridiculous? It sounds like we are saying: *take your sin over to First Christian where sin belongs, for we don't do things like that over here.*

But it really *is* somehow all right over at First Christian. Though we never associate with them otherwise, we'll go over to their place for the sake of an organ for a wedding. The people are the same, wedding party and audience. Only the building is different. We join in worship and praise God for the miracle of marriage portrayed before our eyes. We talk about what a beautiful wedding it was, due in part to the exquisite renditions of the organist.

Nobody seems to sin, not when the wedding is over at First Christian, not even the Church of Christ elder when he writes a check for the organist, pleased to do what he could to make his daughter's wedding all that it should be.

But the tracks have all been covered. The Church of Christ building down the street, dark and unused, is not contaminated by the drama. Sin has been averted and Satan put to flight.

We *are* a peculiar people, aren't we? --- *the Editor*

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Travel Letter . . .

TENNESSEE BACK TO BACK

My last two times out were to Tennessee, where a Texan has every right to feel secure. The first time was to Nashville where I shared in a renewal conference with 90 brothers and one sister from what might be called *open* or *free* Churches of Christ, with some from Christian Churches. *Open* and *free* might not describe all the congregations represented, so we can simply say that those present are interested in *renewal,* which is the word they kept using.

After a few days at home I flew to Atlanta and then to Knoxville, where I was met by a young sister who is part of a campus ministry at the University of Tennessee, who bore me to the resort town of Gatlinburg, which is the gateway to the Rockies. Fellowship 80, sponsored by Challenge Unlimited, which ministers to work on campuses, welcomed 900 college youth to the weekend affair at the elegant Sheridan Hotel, which is perched atop the highest in high Gatlinburg. Usually a summer resort, the kids got bargain rates for their February gathering. I was doubly blessed that weekend, for I was not only one of the teachers for that grand gang, but I had Tom Skinner, the famed black evangelist who made his way up from gang fights in Harlem, as my roommate.

The Nashville meeting was sponsored by the Belmont Church of Christ, which has been avant-garde among us for a decade or more, and it may well be the most unique Church of Christ in the world. About 1,000 “members” (nothing is really official) attend two services Sunday a.m., and there are sundry gatherings all over the place through the week. About 50 of them are involved in tutoring school kids, especially blacks, who are behind in their studies. Others conduct studies in homes. Several are involved in Koinonia Ministries, which is a separate legal entity but practically the same, housed across the street. The area is inner-city if not ghetto, and the church for years has reached out to the sub-culture. But the church is cross-section, old but mostly young, Church of Christ and non-Church of Christ (more *non* perhaps), rich and poor (but mostly *well-employed),* traditional and “Charismatic,” (tilted toward the latter though not tongue-speaking in the assembly). They are deeply spiritual and animated. They will stand in the old pews in order to talk to someone across the crowded auditorium, and if you visit you will probably get hugged, and maybe prayed for, if you suggest it. But they are not pushy, not at all.

Their building is an old Church of Christ landmark, having had in its pulpit and pews some of the great names of our past. When other churches fled to the suburbs, it stayed put, but it barely made it until it brought Don Finto in as preacher, which is the most reckless thing it ever did, for life has never been the same since. They are a curiosity (and perhaps a threat) to other Churches of Christ and for years have been less than enthusiastically fellowshipped, to put it mildly. Even though its preacher was once on the David Lipscomb College faculty, the college has been know to fire any of its staff who attend there. But today Belmont sort of ignores its Church of Christ ties, such as they are, and goes on and does its thing.

The story is out that Belmont has gone instrumental music, which is not quite right, even though this gives the other churches a kind of “I told you so” victory. Since the church is in the very heart of the western-country music center of the world, it has some of those talented people in their midst, composers and singers alike, such as Amy Grant, the Dogwoods, Brown Banister, Ron Huff, Henry and Hazel Slaughter, Gary Paxton, and

Mike Hudson, artists known in Nashville music circles and beyond. Because of this and other reasons the church has a lot of special music, which does not always lend itself to a cappella arrangement, so the elders decided that instruments can be used for these special events. One evening while we were there Amy Grant sang, self-accompanied with guitar, and Carl Ketcherside spoke (no guitar!), both highly talented people. You just haven't been there until you hear Amy sing *My Father's Eyes,* which she composed. By the way, many if not most of the songs Belmont sings are composed by their own people! How is that for uniqueness?

If you should visit Belmont, you would probably have to stand unless you were early, and you would likely sing with the congregation *a cappella,* but you might also see such symbols of apostasy as a guitar in the hands of some singing group like the Homecomers. If that is "going instrumental," then Belmont is gone. But you would see more, which is far more significant, such as Spirit-filled people who love each other and who reach out to suffering humanity.

I will leave it to others to argue about their instruments, for I am impressed that they give, through various and spasmodic offerings, upwards of $800,000 a year, much of it to the poor and to missionary outreach. How many churches do you know that give $240,000 a year to benevolence, which was Belmont's figure for 1979. They also have a substantial missionary program, including a home for missionaries on leave. Some of the sharing groups take on special projects, one of which is the sponsorship of a Laotian family of seven. I met with this family with Ken and Ruth Rideout, recently missionaries to Thailand, who served as interpreters. I found the parents of this young family with an insatiable appetite for Jesus and his teaching.

Belmont reaches out to all segments of society. Don Finto told us of a stripper who was led to visit them. "I take off my clothes for a living," she said to him, "Can I be a Christian?" He gave his warm smile and told her that if she surrendered her life to Jesus that he would solve that problem for her.

To tell of the various programs of Koinonia would take more space than I have, for they deal in books, records, tapes, mail-outs, in-house programs of various sorts, coffee house counseling. I was there one evening after a day of research at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society library, where I spent a few days following the conference. I watched school kids flock in, mostly blacks, and be entertained by a big, handsome black man, who talked to them about opera, explaining some of the themes in great operas, and then singing parts to them, accompanied by another black at the piano, a teacher at Fisk University. The singer took pains to show them that he was singing opera, not *opry.* All this impressed me as tall stuff for poor blacks in Nashville's inner city.

I have not left much room to tell about the conference, but that is intentional, for I will not describe it in detail. The day sessions were conducted at the DCHS library, which was appropriate since that charming edifice basks in history, and they were closed to the public, while the evening sessions, where I spoke, were open. Those attending compared notes, shared mutual problems, and encouraged each other. They worked in part through small groups, praying and opening up to each other.

At Gatlinburg I conducted three seminars, addressed the assembly on the meaning of baptism, and did a "walk on" on Raccoon John Smith for the Sunday a.m. gathering. After the baptism speech they walked down the mountain to the Holiday Inn for several immersions, late Saturday night, by pre-arrangement of course. Mid-way through the baptisms the police came to run them out of the hotel's heated pool, which was not the best PR for Holiday Inn. I suspect every kid there will think of that whenever they see such a hotel. Someone at the hotel must have blown it, for our people had it all set up with the management well in advance. They returned to the Sheridan and finished the job in a very cold outside pool. Baptism always goes better in the cold, anyhow.

Some there had seen me do a sort of Hal Holbrook (Mark Twain) on our pioneers, and wanted me to do one on this occasion. So with a Prince Albert coat, raccoon hat, and cane I did old Raccoon for them, walking in from the back of the ballroom, causing some to think I was some kook who had walked in off the street, which was not altogether wrong. Since I was the first man, if not the only man, in history who ever united two churches, it seemed appropriate that the angels would accompany me to a visit to 900 college youth atop a mountain who believed in unity so much that they would sing "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord" at 2 o'clock in the morning. With that entree I told them about my life ("You can call me *Raccoon* 'cause I come from the boondocks of southern Kentucky where the raccoons roam"), its triumphs and tragedies, and how me and Barton Stone put believers together in a unity meetin' in Lexington, Kentucky. The kids from Kentucky especially liked it!

Walter Short of St. Louis let me ride with him to Nashville where I again spent several days in the DCHS library. I am now on Chap. 15 (about 400 pages) of a 20-chapter history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, which I never call the Restoration Movement. Staying with the retired dentist Dr. Fred Hall and wife, the visit was enhanced by getting to talk with Dr. Hall about Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, T. B. Larimore, H. Leo Boles, R. H. Boll, and others who made Nashville famous for Churches of Christ, many of whom Dr. Hall knew personally in his younger years, having been a student in the *last* year of old Nashville Bible School, while his wife attended the *first* year of David Lipscomb College.

He shared many interesting tidbits, one being how Tolbert Fanning's remains were transferred to another cemetery so as to make room for Nashville International Airport, his farm and school having once stood where the big jets now do business.

But it was T. B. Larimore that I wanted the doctor to talk about, for he knew him personally and often heard him preach. There is an aged sister here in Denton who also knew him, and I have pumped her memory as well. Schooled by Tolbert Fanning, T. B. Larimore, in my view, represents "the finest" in Church of Christ history. Dr. Hall confirmed my own findings, that brother Larimore during the days of the Disciples-Church of Christ split, which continued for decades, could never be persuaded to take sides with either faction. He would teach the word and preach the gospel, *powerfully,* but never take part in the controversies that his brethren chose to divide over.

Dr. Hall remembers this story from Larimore: There was this train engineer that would get terribly upset over a dog that continually came to bark at his big engine. He would stop the train and throw coals of fire at the dog! Then Larimore would say, referring kindly to those who wanted him to preach for or against organs or missionary societies, *I don't have time to stop and throw coals of fire at dogs!*

It is tragic that the modern Church of Christ did not follow in the great tradition of T. B. Larimore and his beloved teacher, Tolbert Fanning. We have always been vulnerable to men more ambitious, more party-minded, more manipulating, more bombastic. Still it is a glorious heritage and I am thankful for it. I love to dig in those old hills and mine the gold, learning lessons even from the alloy. --- *the Editor*

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RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW DECADE
(As Seen by Harvard Faculty)

(Continued from last issue)

5. Authoritarian capitalism

Stephen Marglin, professor of economics, seems to be the opposite of Prof. Nozick, for he wants *more* government, not less, or at least more planning, *democratic* planning, as he puts it, that involves the shop foreman as well as the corporate executive. Capitalism has been authoritarian, and this is the real culprit, not government. He wants to limit capitalism by what he calls "democracy." The fellows on the production lines are to have a

hand in running and planning big business as well as the Henry Fords, he is telling us, and *that* is his response to the magazine's query as to our most serious problem.

It is incredible that the professor could see "authoritarian capitalism" as a serious problem while international communism is not even mentioned, not by any of the professors. Even if they did write before the present crisis in Iran and Afghanistan, one would think that men who are wise in world affairs would see totalitarian regimes and atheistic communism as staggering problems.

6. Mass poverty in the cities.

We would expect a professor of city planning to speak to the problem of the cities, as does Peter Rogers. He refers to poverty on a mass scale, not just in isolated pockets, in the great cities of the world. Of the 4.3 billion now in the world upwards of half of these are very poor and 500 million are in extreme poverty. These poor of the world continue to migrate to the cities. In 1800 less than 2% of the world's population lived in cities of 100,000 or more, and a hundred years later it was still only 5.5%. But today 26%, or 800 million, live in the cities, and this will increase to 40%, or *one billion more,* in the next 20 years. By then there will be 40 cities in the world with 10 million people. Mexico City will likely be the largest of all with 30 million people!

Prof. Rogers tells us that history shows that rural people never riot, only city people. Riots, coups, revolutions will be the fruit of the frustration of these large cities of the near future, for they will be worse than Calcutta now is. These cities will be like giant powder kegs, capable of blowing the entire world into social and economic instability.

He notes that both the pope and Castro, in their talks before the United Nations, called for a sharing of the wealth through foreign aid, the latter specifying 300 billion over the next decade. But Rogers notes that such aid is not *the* answer, for it would take 200 billions to provide sanitation facilities alone for these vast cities. What is needed, he says, is for these poor nations to get a fair shake in the world market, paying less for what they import and getting more for their own resources. They have long been exploited by rich nations. If they had an OPEC cartel, like the mid-east nations have for their oil, and thus get a better price for their coffee, tea, tin, copper, etc., their world would change in a hurry. In the meantime foreign aid should go toward building the means of production in these nations, not for commodities such as food. Their technology must develop so that they can create jobs for rural people, thus stemming the constant flow to the cities. He says this nation should lead the developed nations in giving 0.7% of their GNP each year for this purpose, which is what the United Nations is asking. That would double what we are now giving, to 13 billion a year. If the other nations followed, much of the world could be economically renewed, and tomorrow could be saved.

7. *Control of nuclear weapons.*

David Riesman has long been one of Harvard's renowned profs, and from his chair in social science he points to arms control as the most crucial issue facing the world. He was not optimistic about the immediate future, even before Iran and Afghanistan. He says we must find some way to work with the dissidents within Russia who oppose the "metal eaters," as they are called, those within the Soviet union who are bent upon an arms race.

I would be interested in how *you*, the reader, would see our problems as we face the 1980's. In terms of the church's mission we have to recognize that the Church of Christ upon earth is still divided and the world is not yet won to Jesus Christ, and those two are surely related, according to Jesus' prayer for the oneness of all believers. A warring, divided, carnal church will never reach our troubled world.

He was in the world, John wrote as he described the eternal Logos becoming flesh. He was in our kind of world, the problems not being all that different. We are in that same world, and there is a sense in which we are to love it, as he loved it, and to bless it, as he blessed it. Our churches must become conscious of "the geography of world need" and apply the power of the gospel to those needs. To become more conscious of our world out there and its problems is part of the answer. --- *the Editor*

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Pilgrimage of Joy. . . No. 43

RECOVERY OF SOMETHING OLD

W. Carl Ketcherside

It is amazing how the history of the "kingdom of God" is interwoven with and affected by the things which transpire in the kingdoms of men. Although we have no continuing city here, we have to live in a lot of them which are not going to continue, and in which rot and decay have already set in. We may be strangers and pilgrims, but we are also sojourners in a land that is not ours. Whatever happens politically, economically, or socially affects us all. Candidates for glory die in times of epidemics and plagues as do the rankest unbelievers. All of us alike live in an atmosphere that has been colored by guilt and sin.

In March of 1968 President Johnson shook the nation by announcing that he would not enter the race for another term. That "waved the flag" which made it possible for everyone to get into the race. It was won by Richard Nixon who received 43.4 percent of

the popular vote to 42.7 by Hubert Humphrey. A surprising 13.5 percent went to George Wallace. The stage was thus set for the traumatic and as yet unexplained condition which later transpired and took the name of Watergate.

On April 4, Martin Luther King was shot to death on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, where he had gone to assist in a strike by black sanitation workers. On June 8 James Earl Ray was arrested in London and charged with the wanton murder. Frustration, disappointment, and depression gripped the black community and expressed itself in looting and violence. “Then, as if a frightful and malign influence was manipulating the nation, Robert Kennedy was shot on June 6 in Los Angeles. It cast a pall over a peaceful populace who had rejected forceful overthrow of the existing order as a rational alternative to the ballot box.

During the year, death claimed one of the greatest examples of triumph over handicaps in our nation. At the age of 87, in Westport, Connecticut, Helen Keller gave up the struggle to maintain a life which had been marked by privation and suffering. At the age of nineteen months she became blind, deaf and mute. Under the careful and gentle tutelage of Anne Sullivan Macy she quickly learned to read and in 1900 she was able to enter Radcliffe College. She graduated with honors in 1904. Later she lectured throughout the world, visiting wounded veterans and giving them hope and infusing them with courage.

In spite of the frightful murders, the looting, and the rapine which ripped our nation apart, the year ended on a note of real faith. Nell and I were in the home of Jerry, our son, and with his family on Christmas Eve when it happened. Three astronauts aboard Apollo 8 had orbited the moon several times. They were the first human beings to view the far side of the moon. Suddenly one of them began to read from the sacred scriptures. Man’s voice came from the greatest distance it had ever come with the age-old truth. It seemed that everything was all right again.

It was about this time that I had matured to the place where I had learned to trust in God fully and completely. I began to realize that he knew the end from the beginning, and could call the things that be not as though they were. He holds the whole world in His hand. This made two changes in my life. First of all, I prayed before arriving at a place that God would take the whole thing under His providence and bring together those who needed me most and let me relate to them for the mutual upbuilding of both of us. Since that time I have never been uptight about crowds. I have spoken to those who were present with equal fervor, whether there were six or six thousand, and have praised His name for what He did.

Second, I began to pray that He would open up for me great doors and effectual, although the adversaries were many. I realize that He never had a less qualified person through whom to work. The only thing I had going for me was an intense desire to see His will accomplished, and a fervent love for people. My educational attainments Were as nothing and I cast what little I did have to the dogs. I had no degrees and had never been to college. But I resolved to go wherever the opportunity was afforded and to do my best. That prayer opened up for me chances which were tremendous and for which I am humbly grateful and profoundly thankful.

On February 13 I went to Milligan College to deliver an address at the Welshimer Memorial Lectureship. Brother P. H. Welshimer was in Canton, Ohio when a great revival was held by Billy Sunday. He followed up on those who made a profession, baptizing hundreds into Christ. He began the largest adult Bible Class in the nation at the time. A Welshimer Room is contained in the beautiful library which bears his name at Milligan, and every year a lectureship is held in his honor. My theme was “The Cross and the Growth of the Church.”

That night I was scheduled to speak at Erwin, Tennessee, as one of five speakers brought in by a joint rally of Protestant Churches, each year, to demonstrate that, in spite of their differences, Jesus Christ is Lord. It afforded an opportunity for those with varied doctrinal biases to meet others in the community. That afternoon I was interviewed over radio. I then spoke to more than 700 persons gathered in the building of the First Baptist Church, following which I held a dialogue session with the Protestant clergy of the area. I came away convinced that these men were greatly responsible for the perpetuation of feuds and divisions.

The next morning I spoke to more than a thousand students in the local high school. At noon I broadcast a sermon from the pulpit of the First Christian Church. As I prepared to fly out of the area that afternoon, I looked back upon my stay of one and a half days, and thought of the bases I had touched. It was apparent that God was opening doors, for by no stretch of the imagination could I conceive of myself arranging all of these things. But it was merely beginning.

A little more than two weeks later, on March 3-7 found me at Langley Air Force Base for a Religious Emphasis Week. It was arranged by George C. Fisher, Wing Chaplain of the 4500th Air Base Command. Brother Fisher was up for retirement soon and wanted to leave a heritage to the men. I was met at the air terminal by a Filipino soldier in a limousine. He was to be my orderly while on base and took me to a luxury apartment which was to be my home. It was stocked with all kinds of liquor when I arrived and with the same amount when I left.

The next morning, which was Sunday, I was to speak in three Protestant Chapels, one immediately after the other. My car was awaiting when I finished at one to hustle me over to the next one. I was saddened by the fact that I could not talk directly to the men, shake hands with them, and share with them. That evening I spoke to the Protestant men of the base at the fourth chapel, following a barbecue. I answered questions from the audience. They were a different kind of questions than one hears in civilian life.

There followed in succession in coming days a meeting with the Junior Youth Group, a bunch of young people, some of whose fathers were flying the skies over Vietnam, and a dinner with a High School Group, during which I fielded their questions and learned a lot about their hangups. I ate at the Officer's Club, and often had early breakfast with men dressed in their flying suits who would be in the air in the next hour with the Far East as their destination. We explored the question of war and its moral force.

One of the most interesting meetings was an address to the 316th Field Maintenance Squadron. Colonel Barner, a bluff Roman Catholic, issued a commander's call, which meant that the men in the squadron had to attend or be in the hospital. It was a captive audience. Many were resentful, a few of them openly hostile. In the group were hard-bitten men from the streets of Brooklyn and New York City, farm boys from the wheat fields of Kansas, and sun-tanned lads from ranches in Texas and Arizona. That day I received a lesson in how to weld an army of trained men together out of raw recruits from every walk of life. I began on time and ended on time. There was no dragging the feet in the military.

The last day there were two addresses. One was to the Protestant Women of the base. They were joined by busloads of women from two nearby bases. It was for the women I felt the greatest compassion. They were separated from their men for weeks on end and never knew how they would return, if they did. Life for these women was a cycle of worry and fear. There was the daily dread of the knock on the door to reveal the loss of a loved one on some foreign soil. In the evening we closed with a grand finale, a meeting for everyone. During the time I was on the base I prayed more than I had for a long time. It was easy to sense the loneliness of those I met, people who could establish no routine, who had no certain home.

I went almost immediately to Santa Clara, California, to speak at the Sunday school convention. It consisted of more than 600 superintendents and teachers, representing every evangelical church in the great valley, except the Church of Christ. It was held in Calvary Baptist Church, and I stayed in the "prophet's chamber" of the church. This was a lovely two-room apartment upstairs. It was well-stocked with food of every kind, so that one could fix his own meals and even entertain visitors if he liked.

The congregation had started seven years before with twenty-one members meeting in a home. The Sunday following the convention, the goal was 1400. They had registered 1380 the Sunday before. I did not get to talk to the two ministers. They were not there. They were out making calls the entire time. Another spent his time in the hospitals. But I talked to other members of the staff about the phenomenal growth. They attributed it to two things --- the people found their needs supplied and the fellowship. The motto of the church was “Where you are a stranger only once, and then only for a few minutes.” In addition to speaking each night I also taught two workshops.

But the thing that gave me the greatest satisfaction was an invitation to address the evangelical preachers of the area at a noon luncheon. There were almost 300 present. The president of the group was a Baptist. The man who introduced me was a member of the Salvation Army. It was just the kind of group I had been looking for to tryout a new approach to restoration. I spoke on “Renewal through Recovery of the apostolic proclamation, purpose and power.” As I spoke I noticed the men taking envelopes from their pockets and hastily jotting down notes. Little did they realize that they were being treated to Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address, presented in the light of contemporary needs.

I pointed out that renewal was not the creation of something new, but the recovery of something old. We had surrendered a lot of provinces which had to be recaptured. To do this demanded a strategy for world conquest. As I offered them such a strategy, they seemed deeply grateful.

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CHRISTIANS IN THESE LAST DAYS

Grant Edwards

Jeremiah proclaimed, “Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved from evil” (Jer. 4:14). The result: nobody listened. Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C.

Prophets who predict future events and write scripture may not exist today but a prophetic ministry does. God endows some men with discernment into present events enabling them to make statements concerning the future. Some of these men are raising their voices in alarm for America’s future.

Francis Schaeffer stated during a speech in Pittsburgh, “The soft days are over for christians in America. The United States will either return to the biblical basis upon which our country was founded or an authoritative government will take over.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn delivered the commencement address entitled, “A World Split Apart” to the graduating class at Harvard last spring. Speaking as an outsider but friend to our country he accused our society of a decline in courage, loss of willpower, and superficiality. All of these are symptoms of a failing culture. Toward the end of his speech he concluded, “If the world has not come to it’s end, it has approach a major turn in history equal in importance to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.” (The complete text of Solzhenitsyn’s speech is contained in the July 7 issue of National Review.)

Nobody listened to Jeremiah. Will anybody listen today? Probably few if any, our culture is too comfortable for drastic change. Most Americans will be deaf to the symptoms of doom until it is upon them.

But will the church listen? There is little hope for a non-christian society in America. The little hope that survives depends upon christians who will listen to the warnings and a church that will lead renewal. Maybe it is too late to renew our society, but a renewed church can take advantage of tremendous opportunities to evangelize and minister to an America with no hope.

The renewal needed today is summed up in the word “difference”. Christians must be different. The church must exist as a society so radically different that outsiders will be impressed, and the scripture that reads, “. . . the Lord was adding to their number daily . . .” will be an expression of the church today. The difference must lie in two areas --- discipleship and materialism.

Solzhenitsyn was correct when he described hastiness and superficiality as the psychic disease of the twentieth century. It is also a disease of the church. Upwards of 50 million Americans claim to have experienced a new birth in Christ, but our society continues to deteriorate. The crime rate increases, in the last fifteen years the number of unmarried couples living together has shot up 700%, and yet 1976 was declared the “Year of the Evangelical” by both Time and Newsweek.

How is it possible for Christianity with it’s life changing power to be embraced by the multitudes and have little effect upon society? The answer is too simple: Americans are superficial in their discipleship.

Discipleship is commitment to the Lordship of Christ, His teachings, and a body of believers. All three are necessary elements. Discipleship begins with proclaiming Christ as Lord and becoming obedient to His teachings. Faith and works are two elements of

discipleship; the third is neglected. Discipleship fails when Christians are not committed to a body of believers.

Too little time is available for Christian commitment to one another. The Church of Christ is a New Testament church following the pattern of Acts 2:42, “And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” All the essential elements of these verses are practiced except one. The Church of Christ devotes itself to the apostles teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. The neglected element is time. Are we truly committed to a body of believers, “continually” (Acts 2:42), and “Day by day” (Acts 2:46)?

The church of the first century spent time together. Today many Christians have become entwined in the subtle ways of society. There is the television, the job, the club, the racquetball game, the kids; and when all is accomplished there is little time left for fellowship. Certainly, Sunday service is squeezed in and the particularly diligent add Wednesday night bible study. But the time spent in fellowship does not measure up to the “Day by day” basis of the first century. Instead of continuing in one mind from house to house the church continues in many minds from activity to activity. All the while Christians within the church remain unknown entities with vague problems and unused gifts.

Christians, continually together, can observe the strengths and weaknesses of each other. Spiritual gifts are developed as Christians minister and become sensitive to one another. This sensitivity and ministering yields Christians who become true brothers and sisters. All gifts, all possessions, all time will be spent helping a Christian in need. This is the family of God and the witness that God can use to add daily to the church those who are being saved.

Lack of time and materialism are closely connected. Christians do not have time to serve God because they are too involved increasing their material kingdom. Materialism is the great American sin. All Americans are rich compared with some inhabitants of India.

The American ideal is to get: get one car then two; get a house then a bigger one; get a boat, a camper, and the other necessities in our affluent society. Few Christians are different, out to possess all they desire. To pay for them the husband works one job then two and the wife works. The conclusion, when all the bills are paid: there is little time left to serve the Lord.

The standard of the first century church was not ‘to get’ but ‘to give’. They were not out to raise their standard of living but lowered it, giving excess possessions to the church. All things were held in common, no rich or poor, everyone had enough.

Today a Christian selling property for the poor is a rare species. An almost extinct species is the Christian who sells property for the poor overseas. Too many excuses are given for this rarity, “I’ve earned what I have,” “I want to retire, I need all my money in the bank,” and “We’re not responsible for the poor.”

Instead of trusting God to provide for the future, trust is held in the bank. In the first century, Christians trusted each other. Today it is easy to replace one another with bank accounts, insurance policies, and investments. Under the pretense of saving for the future treasure is hoarded on earth. The example of Barnabas is covered-up as relevant to the first century only.

There are alternatives. Instead of huge debts and long hours at work, we should investigate ways of sharing expenses by living together. Recently an older couple left occupying a large house when their children left home, opened their house to two college students. The students, short on money, spent eight hours each week on maintenance. For their efforts they received free room and board. This situation benefitted all. The students were not pinched for money and the older couple had free time to serve God.

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BOOK NOTES

Angels in Heaven and Earth by Stephen D. Swihart gives the facts that answers the question as to whether angels are on assignment today. 3.10 postpaid.

Stan Mooneyham, president of World Vision and one who visits among the troubled people of the world, gives us the untold story of the boat people in his *Sea of Heartbreak.* He says the new “holocaust” he saw in Southeast Asia is the ultimate in human misery, and a story the world must know. 3.55 postpaid.

If you are interested in an introduction to the Old Testament, which includes a chapter on how the books were formed, by one of our own men, the book is *The World and Literature of the Old Testament,* edited by John T. Willis of ACU. It tells how the Christian is to use that portion of the Bible. 9.95 postpaid.

From Scotland we have a limited supply of hard-to-get *The Plain Man's Book of Prayers* (two paperback volumes), which are really super. Ouida and I read them in family devotions. They have morning and evening prayers with scriptural readings, as well as prayers for special occasions. 3.95 each postpaid. Also by Barclay and back in print is his *The Promise of the Spirit,* 4.50 postpaid.

For 2.50 we will send you *Do Yourself a Favor: Love Your Wife,* which is really a big seller, and for a good reason. You should not miss it, especially if you have a wife or are a wife. In the same packet you should let us include C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity,* which really puts the finger on what a Christian should believe. 2.50 pp.

Since *Joni,* as a movie, will now be seen by millions, you should do something even better: read the story itself, a young woman's struggle against quadriplegia and depression to a beautiful victory. 3.95 postpaid. Along with it might be another woman's (and everybody's) book by Ann Kiemel, *I Love the Word Impossible,* 3.25 pp.

Our readers keep asking about K. C. Moser's books. They are available at 5.10 each postpaid, *The Gist of Romans* and *The Way of Salvation.*

For 13.95 pp. we will send you one of the finer works on theology, one that has for 30 years been used in seminaries. It has been revised and has a new chapter on the Holy Spirit. The late Henry C. Thiessen's *Lectures in Systematic Theology* has chapters on the nature of God, the Bible, angels, man, salvation, church, and last things.

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Our bound volume for 1979 will be ready later in the year. You need not order if you are on our list to receive it. Four other bound volumes are still available: *The Restoration Mind* (1971-72) at 4.95; *The Word Abused* (1975-76) at 5.95; *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) at 5.50; *The Ancient Order* (1978) at 5.50.

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